

Town Board Adopts Resolutions to Continue Shellfish Mariculture Programs for Mount Sinai School District and Western Suffolk BOCES Students

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Farmingville, NY - At the July 19 Town Board meeting, Supervisor Mark Lesko and the Town Board voted to adopt resolutions to continue the Shellfish Mariculture Program for the Mount Sinai School District and Western Suffolk BOCES. The program will be aimed at educating students about aquaculture techniques and how to raise seed clams for planting at public restoration sites.

"Shellfishing has such a rich history in Brookhaven Town and has always been vital to our economy and our ecology," said Supervisor Lesko. "This program goes a long way in educating students that we must preserve and protect our marine life throughout our Town."

Councilwoman Jane Bonner said, "If we start to educate our children now about the shellfish mariculture, then we can help to assure it's survival in the years to come. I look forward to working with the Mount Sinai School District and our Town staff to continue this program for the students."

Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld, who serves as the Town Council's Environmental Protection Liaison said, "Shellfish are so important to our environment and I have worked hard to make sure that we provide all that is needed to protect and preserve our mariculture. The key to this new program is educating our young people so they will continue to make progress in maintaining and growing the shellfish population."

"We are very happy to continue working in cooperation with the Town of Brookhaven on the Mariculture Shellfish program," said Mt. Sinai High School Science teacher David Chase, "It's an opportunity for our students to get involved in their community, as well as a great learning experience that benefits the students, the baymen, the environment and the local economy. I look forward to getting started on the next phase of this project."

"Many of the students say that the clam Mariculture program is the best part of their Marine Biology course at the high school," said Dan Stenzler, Marine Biologist with Western Suffolk BOCES. "It's an educationally sound program that offers students a great opportunity to learn more about the ecological, historical and economic aspects of the shellfish industry on Long Island and how important it is to everyone."

As part of the new Shellfish Mariculture Program, the Town will provide materials for the Mount Sinai School District and Western Suffolk BOCES to construct new shellfish rafts, mooring supplies to anchor the rafts in Mount Sinai Harbor and shellfish to stock the rafts. Students will do the work required while being supervised by their teachers and Town of Brookhaven personnel. The Town will also provide personnel and machinery to assist in the installation and removal of the rafts and periodic maintenance. The total cost of the program will be \$3000 in 2011.

Since 2007, the Town of Brookhaven has been running a community based hard clam nursery program and on June 29, 500,000 soft clam seed, only 1-2 mm. in length, arrived at the Town of Brookhaven's Mariculture Facility at Cedar Beach, Mt. Sinai. Within a half hour, the rice sized clams were placed on culturing screens and provided with algae-rich water pumped from Mt. Sinai Harbor. This project, recommended by local baymen concerned with the decreasing soft clam harvests, is the first of its kind involving soft clams on Long Island. Over the coming weeks, as the soft clams increase in size, they will be separated and given more room to grow. When they are large enough, these soft clams will be planted in areas of Mt. Sinai Harbor that will support their continued growth.

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